



Child & Youth Readiness Cabinet

In October 2008, Governor Deval Patrick signed Executive Order 505 establishing the Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet (“Readiness Cabinet”). The purpose of the Readiness Cabinet is to foster coordination and collaboration across state departments and agencies that serve Massachusetts' children, youth and families.

Co-chaired by the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services, the Readiness Cabinet's membership also includes the Secretaries of Administration and Finance, Housing and Economic Development, Labor and Workforce Development, Public Safety and Security, Energy and Environmental Affairs, Transportation as well as The Child Advocate. Commissioners from several agencies within the Executive Offices of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and Education (EOE) also participate as full members. With the aim of improved collaboration, the Readiness Cabinet is primarily focused on Governor Patrick's goal of *closing the achievement gap*.

Closing the Achievement Gap:

Closing the achievement gap is central to all of the Commonwealth's education initiatives. The Patrick administration believes that in order to close the achievement gap, we need both to improve classroom instruction *and* mitigate the effects of poverty. By addressing *all* students' non-academic needs (that is, those that relate to their physical, behavioral, and social-emotional health – as well as their housing and other family support challenges), we will put students in the best possible position to access educational opportunities and succeed.

In 2010, Governor Patrick signed into law the Achievement Gap Act, which requires the state's lowest performing, or Level 4, schools to include strategies for addressing these non-academic needs of students as part of their school redesign plans. To reinforce this expectation, the legislation requires that the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, as well as other Cabinet Secretariats, respond to the needs of children and families and work with school districts to ensure a holistic response to child/family needs.

In an effort to ensure that all Level 4 schools have access to the resources they need to address these issues, the Readiness Cabinet is focusing its early work in five communities with many of the Commonwealth's Level 4 schools – Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Springfield and Worcester. Work in these five

Child & Youth Readiness Cabinet Members

Co-chairs

Matthew Malone, Secretary, Executive Office of Education

John Polanowicz, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Members

Cheryl Bartlett, Commissioner, Department of Public Health

Kathy Betts, Assistant Secretary, Education Office of Health and Human Services

Greg Bialecki, Secretary, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Andrea Cabral, Secretary, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Richard Davey, Secretary, Transportation

Joanne Goldstein, Secretary, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Glen Shor, Secretary, Executive Office of Administration and Finance

Mitchell Chester, Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Ed Dolan, Commissioner, Department of Probation

Rosalie Edes, Assistant Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Peter Forbes, Commissioner, Department of Youth Services

Marcia Fowler, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health

Richard Freeland, Commissioner, Department of Higher Education

Gail Garinger, Child Advocate

Elin Howe, Commissioner, Department of Developmental Services

Josiane Martinez, Executive Director, Office of Refugees and Immigrants

Stacey Monahan, Commissioner, Department of Transitional Assistance

Olga Roche, Acting Commissioner, Department of Children and Families

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr., Secretary, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Tom Weber, Commissioner, Department of Early Care and Education

Staff

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communities is designed to provide models and lessons learned about how inter-agency collaboration can improve outcomes for students – making an evidence-based case for expansion of this type of inter-agency collaboration to other districts.

The Readiness Cabinet has committed to working with these school communities to better equip district and school personnel, as well as service providers to meet the needs of the whole child – and ultimately, to improve outcomes for all children. The Readiness Cabinet’s approach is customized based on each school community’s unique assets, challenges, levels of capacity and infrastructure to address the non-academic barriers to learning. EOHHS has identified three Readiness Cabinet Liaisons (“Liaisons”) – on part-time loan from three agencies (Department of Transitional Assistance, Department of Mental Health, and Department of Children and Families) – who are building relationships, capacity, and better linkages between schools and their state agency and community-based partners. Liaisons are also sharing information across agencies, problem solving, and sharing plans for capacity building at the district and school level.

The work in our pilot communities includes: convening inter-agency working groups to focus on areas of priority for the school districts (i.e., attendance, behavioral health); supporting district-wide efforts to advance early literacy efforts; participating in district planning for partnership and service delivery expansion; facilitating the replication of best practices from one pilot community to another; and identifying policies and practices that are inconsistent with school district policies and seeking to rectify those discrepancies when possible. In addition, the Cabinet is convening occasional working groups on topics that will help move the needle on closing the achievement gap – including early childhood, foster youth and youth violence.

For additional information about the Child & Youth Readiness Cabinet, please contact Cabinet Manager Abby Weiss at abby.weiss@state.ma.us, or 617.979.8348.